

Undergraduate Financial Aid Handbook

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An Introduction

The Office of Financial Aid at Bennington College is here to assist student applicants, continuing students, and families by providing application assistance, financial aid and scholarship resources, tips for paying the bill, awareness of financial aid policies, and money management resources.

This handbook is designed to provide you with information regarding your financial aid eligibility, your rights and responsibilities as a student loan borrower, and financial aid terminology. Please review this handbook carefully, as this is one of the means of communication with the Office of Financial Aid as we aim to support Bennington students.

The Office of Financial Aid is located in the Barn, Rm 104 and is open from 9:00 am to 5:00 pm weekdays during the term, and 8:30 am to 4:00 pm during the rest of the year. Students are welcome to stop by with questions at any time or to make an appointment with a staff member.

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A Financial Aid Overview

The primary responsibility for financing an education belongs to the student and their family. Bennington College expects that you (the student) and your parents/legal guardians will contribute toward your college bill from both current and future income and assets. Bennington encourages all students to apply for aid to maximize their funding potential.

Bennington Scholarships are awarded to first-year students and transfer undergraduate applicants at the time of admission and do not require an additional application. Scholarships will automatically renew each academic year of enrollment. See the [Terms and Conditions](#) on the reverse side of the financial aid award letter. Eligible students are **encouraged to apply for need-based aid in addition to merit scholarships.**

Need-Based Aid

A student's eligibility for need-based financial aid is determined according to federal regulations and college financial aid policy guidelines. Using the information you reported on the CSS Financial Aid PROFILE (first yr. only), the FAFSA Student Aid Index (SAI), and your supporting documentation, the Financial Aid Office has calculated your Family Contribution (FC.) The FC is not a prediction of a family's cash on hand but is an indicator of a family's financial strength and our best estimate of what a family can contribute from current income, assets, and other resources. When parents are divorced, separated, or never married, the ability of the noncustodial parent to contribute to college costs will be considered part of the family's financial support of the student. The awarding of need-based funding is based on the applicant meeting federal and state eligibility criteria, the availability of institutional aid resources, review of all funds available to you from other resources, and the number of students requesting these funds. Because Bennington has limited resources, the College is unable to meet a student's full financial need.

Our determination of eligibility assumes that the information reported is accurate. **The College may request verification of certain reported items, including but not limited to your and/or your family's tax transcripts and asset statements, noncustodial parent information, residency status, and sibling enrollment.** Any changes to the information originally provided, may result in a change in the family contribution. Students will be notified of any changes to their aid eligibility.

Financial aid will be reviewed on an annual basis for all U.S. citizens or eligible noncitizens. **Prospective students** should submit their financial aid applications (CSS Profile & FAFSA) in conjunction with the Admissions [application deadlines](#).

Continuing students should submit the FAFSA application and reported tax year data for the upcoming academic year prior to April 15, 2025. March 1st is the priority packaging deadline, students submitting by this deadline will be processed first. All aid awards are packaged based on full-time enrollment and will be revised if you are enrolled less than full-time (11 credits or less per semester). Disbursement of aid to your student account will be in two equal payments, one in the fall and one in the spring, unless otherwise noted.

Communications

We encourage students to monitor their Bennington email accounts and financial aid portal as most communications will be sent to you in this manner. If you choose not to use your Bennington account, please set up an automatic forwarding option to have emails sent to your preferred account. The Office of Financial Aid will direct correspondence to the student rather than to the parents/guardians in accordance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act ([FERPA](#)). Students may enable their parents/guardians or other individuals to discuss their information by signing the FERPA Consent, found in the student financial aid portal.

Preferred Name

The Office of Financial Aid will strive to use your preferred name where possible, but your legal name will continue to be used in business and other processes that require use of a legal name. Examples of where your legal name is necessary include but are not limited to the following:

- Financial Aid - PowerFAIDS
- Financial Aid applications
- Financial Aid documentation
- Tax forms (i.e. W2, 1095C, 1099s)
- Student loan documents
- Certification of Finances
- Veteran Administration Documentation
- Federal Immigration Documentation
- Non-Resident Visas and supporting documentation

Financial Aid Protection of Personally Identifiable Information

Family financial information is held in the strictest confidence, and information about the amount of financial aid packages is not released outside the College's administration without the approval of the student and/or family, unless required by federal law or subpoenaed by a court of law. If fraud is suspected on an application for federal assistance, the College is required to report this situation to the U.S. Inspector General's Office. Information from the student's file will be released to authorities pursuing an investigation.

As a Title IV Institution, Bennington College has the responsibility to protect the identity of its students, faculty and staff, as well as all individuals with whom it has an association, including alumni, donors, and potential students. The College is required to protect Federal Student Aid (FSA) applicant information from unauthorized access and disclosure in compliance with the Gramm-Leach-Bliley Act (GLBA) Safeguard Rule. [Privacy of Consumer Financial Information Rule of the Gramm-Leach-Bliley Act.](#)

Verification

Verification is a required process confirming the information on which an aid award is based. It includes submitting required tax documentation, explanations, or confirmations such as an IRS tax return transcript. Students are urged to complete the Verification process as early as possible before the school year begins, confirming aid eligibility.

When selected, the Office of Financial Aid is required to check the accuracy of certain data elements before federal financial aid can be finalized. To complete this process, the federal government requires most applicants to submit a Verification Worksheet and IRS Tax Transcripts, as well as student/parent W2 forms. Other applicants may be required to provide a signed statement verifying untaxed income, high school completion status, and/or identity/statement of educational purpose. Non-tax filers will need to document their earned income and send copies of W2 forms. Bennington will reconcile your income information using parent and student federal tax returns, schedules, and W2 forms.

Any verification forms requested by the office will be listed and should be submitted through the financial aid portal. *Do not email documents with personal identifying information to the Office of Financial Aid.*

Due to continued updates to the FAFSA application, the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Federal Student Aid is delaying the release of the 2025-26 FAFSA until December 2024.

The FAFSA Simplification Act was enacted by Congress as part of the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021. The law reduces the number of questions students will have to answer on the form, makes crucial changes to the Higher Education Act of 1965 to expand Pell Grant eligibility, and removes outdated restrictions to make federal student aid more accessible to all students.

The FAFSA Simplification Act:

- Introduces significant changes to the FAFSA application process, including changes to the FAFSA form. The need analysis formula, formally known as the *Expected Family Contribution (EFC)*, will now be referred to as the *Student Aid Index (SAI)*.
- The new formula removes the number of family members in college from the calculation, better reflects the FAFSA results, and implements a separate eligibility determination criteria for Federal Pell Grants.
- The FAFSA is introducing the new term *contributor*, which refers to anyone who is required to provide information on a student's FAFSA form, including the student, the student's spouse, a biological or adopted parent, or the parent's spouse. Being a contributor does not imply responsibility for the student's college costs.
- Changes in eligibility calculation. The adjustments to the new Student Aid Index (SAI) calculation will expand Federal Pell Grant eligibility to more students.

The FAFSA Simplification Technical Corrections Act:

- Updated language associated with Cost of Attendance (COA)
- Provided additional flexibility for assisting students with unusual circumstances.
- Modified the terms and conditions for students that qualify for Pell Grant funds based upon meeting special conditions currently associated with the Iraq and Afghanistan Service Grant and the Children of Fallen Heroes Grant.

For additional FAFSA Application data please see

<https://www.bennington.edu/admissions/apply/financing-your-education/financial-aid-undergraduates/apply-financial-aid>

IRS Tax Return Transcripts

As part of the federal aid eligibility, students, parents, and noncustodial parents will be required to consent and approve sharing and importing income and tax information from the IRS to the FAFSA form, even if the attempt to obtain or use such data is ineffective. In most cases no further documentation is needed to verify 2023 information directly from the IRS.

If 2023 income tax return information is unavailable or could not be used, students and or parents should provide the institution with a signed 2023 IRS Tax Return. Tax information should be uploaded into the Financial Aid Portal (secured site) and not sent through email. A 2023 IRS Tax Return Transcript may be obtained through: [IRS Tax Transcript](#)

Students not applying for need-based financial aid are not required to complete verification.

Students or Parents Filing an Amended Tax Return

An individual who files an amended IRS income tax return must provide the College with both of the following:

- successful use of IRS-DRT from the original tax return, and
- a signed copy of the IRS Form 1040X, "Amended U.S. Individual Income Tax Return," filed with the IRS, and an IRS Tax Account Transcript.

Sibling Enrollment

Because a sibling's enrollment in college often has a strong effect on aid eligibility, Bennington may require confirmation of sibling enrollment in college. Enrollment may be checked through the National Student Clearinghouse, using the sibling's name and birthdate provided on the Bennington College Financial Aid Application. If enrollment is not confirmed, Bennington may request that the sibling provide confirmation from their university on a form from Bennington's Financial Aid Office. If confirmation of sibling enrollment cannot be obtained in a timely manner, the financial aid award may be recalculated.

Eligible Non-Citizens

Students who are US-registered aliens are considered "eligible non-citizens" and can receive federal aid, but must have their citizenship status confirmed annually by the

Department of Homeland Security (DHS). This confirmation generally occurs when the FAFSA is processed. If the status is not confirmed or the College needs additional information, the Financial Aid Office staff will inform the student in writing, requesting documentation. The student must supply the needed documentation **within 30 days**. Bennington must send the documentation to the DHS within 10 days and will inform the student of their determined status when a final ruling from the DHS has been received. Bennington must provide an initial determination of the student's status within 15 days of receiving the needed documentation.

Special Circumstances

Special circumstance appeals are considered **at the time of the application review** (FAFSA/Profile). We encourage prospective students and families to disclose this information on the CSS Profile. Examples of circumstances that may warrant a reassessment of a student's aid eligibility could include a job loss, a sibling entering college, or other significant events that have had financial repercussions. Students requesting additional grant consideration will be asked to submit supporting documentation through the financial aid portal. Changes to a student's aid eligibility will be need-based and applied to direct costs only.

For more information regarding mid-year and continuing student appeals see 'Change in Circumstances'.

Dependency

In general, students are considered dependent upon their parents unless they are orphans, wards of the court, or beyond traditional college age. Though students, by reason of age, veteran status, or marital status, may meet federal guidelines for independent status, Bennington may continue to require financial information from parents and include a parental contribution in the financial aid award. EX: A student marries while a student. While independent by federal definition for institutional aid purposes, the parent and the spouse will be required to submit financial information in the determination of aid.

Determination of Eligibility

A U.S. family's ability to pay, known as the Student Aid Index (SAI), is calculated using a formula adopted by Congress and the information submitted by the applicant when filing the FAFSA. The SAI is used in the determination of federal aid including the Pell

Grant and Federal loans and work-study eligibility. The criteria for individual federal aid programs are outlined in a separate publication, [Guide to Student Federal Aid](#).

Eligibility for federal aid is determined according to the information provided on the FAFSA using a formula called Federal Methodology, which computes the Student Aid Index (SAI) based on student and parent income, assets, and other factors. A family's total contribution (FC) will be determined using the federal SAI and CSS Profile data. The Cost of Attendance (COA) includes both direct costs (tuition, fees, standard room and meal plan), and indirect costs (estimates for books, supplies, personal and travel expenses). Your total aid offer (including loans and work study) cannot exceed the total Cost of Attendance.

Bennington uses a separate Institutional Methodology, based on the CSS PROFILE, to determine the eligibility for Bennington need-based grant funds. In addition to the data items requested on the FAFSA, Bennington considers a portion of home equity, a minimum contribution from the student, a contribution from the noncustodial parent, and, in the case of a family with more than one child in college, an evaluation of the actual costs involved in supporting the other student(s). Parents in college and siblings in graduate school are not normally counted as family members in college.

International Students

Bennington's financial aid is limited and is offered to the most competitive of our international applicants. All international students requesting financial aid must apply using the [CSS Profile International Application](#). This form must be completed and submitted electronically.

Most international students requesting financial aid will receive a financial aid package that includes merit scholarship if eligible, a need-based grant, and eligibility for a work-study opportunity. Bennington College does not include loans in financial aid packages. **International applicants must indicate their plan to apply for financial aid when submitting their admission application.**

The determination of the family contribution will be made based on a family's income, asset resources, number of family members in the household and number of siblings of college age (current and future). The family contribution will not change for the remainder of the undergraduate degree. Please note that financial aid awards will be applied toward direct costs related to tuition, fees, room and board. The student and family will be responsible for costs associated with mandatory health insurance, books

and supplies. International students will also be responsible for their travel both to and from the United States, and within the United States; personal expenditures, including the international student health insurance; and will be responsible for the Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVIS) fee. International students may also be required to pay U. S. taxes on their work-study earnings, and scholarships and grants awards that cover more than tuition and fees. See [Tax Filing Information for International Students](#).

International aid applicants no longer need to reapply for financial aid every year since the financial aid package will reflect the [Certification of Finances](#) that will be completed and sent to you from the Office of Financial Aid for signature. Students needing to request additional assistance due to changes in their family's circumstances should review the Financial Aid Appeal Procedures, and contact the Office of Financial Aid to review documentation requirements for this process. International students who indicated "no aid" for financial aid on the initial application are rarely granted assistance in subsequent years, unless there is a significant documentable change in their family's financial situation.

Terms and Conditions

All undergraduate financial aid award offers are based on a two term enrollment pattern, and are dependent upon a determination of eligibility based on grade level, whether or not priority application deadlines have been met (if applicable), and other program specific criteria at the time of the award offer. Awards are contingent upon continued funding from federal, state, and institutional sources.

It is the student's responsibility to complete and submit application materials within the required or recommended timeframes. It is also the student's responsibility to notify the Office of Financial Aid of any circumstantial changes to the information reported in the FAFSA and supporting documentation.

Please review the [Terms and Conditions](#) of your Financial Aid Package.

Billing and Aid

Tuition bills are mailed by the Bennington College Business Office on approximately June 1 for fall term, on December 15 for spring term, and monthly thereafter as long as a balance is due. Except for students using the Payment Plan options offered by Bennington College, tuition bills are due prior to a student's arrival each semester. Payments are payable on August 1 (fall term) and February 1 (spring term).

Most financial aid will be reflected as pending on a student's account once aid awards have been accepted on the financial aid portal and all required verification items are completed. Federal Direct Loans are only credited if the student completes entrance counseling and signs a Master Promissory Note.

Institutional grants and scholarship and federal aid will be posted to the student's account once the semester has begun and the Add/Drop period has ended. The posting of state grants, outside scholarships and tuition benefits will be reflected once the proceeds are received.

Federal Work-Study (FWS) funds are not credited to the bill at all. The work-study included on your aid letter is an eligibility. Students are not guaranteed a job during the term, but many who try to obtain FWS work are successful. Earnings are paid directly to the student through payroll and are intended for personal expenses during the term.

Balances on a student's account will be returned to the student (or, if Parent PLUS loan balance, parent) unless the student (or parent) requests in writing that the College hold the credit in the student's account to assist in budgeting payment for the following term. No interest on this credit balance is accrued. Refund checks will be issued through Student Accounts within 14 days after the credit balance occurring.

It is recommended that students arrive on campus with sufficient funds to cover books, class supplies and initial expenses. Students not intending to work on campus during the academic year should budget for at least \$3,000 for books, supplies and personal expenses.

For more information with regards to Student Billing or Payment Plan options please refer to the [website](#).

College Costs

Direct and Indirect Costs

Financial aid awards are based on standard budget items that include tuition, fees, and room and board, as well as estimated (indirect costs) for books, transportation, and personal expenses.

Direct charges, including tuition, housing and meal plans, an activities fee, a health administration fee, a transcript fee for entering students, and materials charges for some classes will be applied to your student account. Direct billed costs are published

on the [student billing](#) website and are included on your aid eligibility letter. **Note:** Your billed charges may differ from your award offer based on your individual choices for housing, meal plan, or your need for health insurance. Updates to your cost of attendance will be made during a reconciliation of charges with the Student Accounts Office.

Optional services for which students will be charged include health insurance (mandatory if not otherwise covered), and car registration fees.

Budgeting for the cost of a student's education means planning for more general expenses as well. These may include books and supplies, personal expenses, transportation to and from school, and loan fees. While these costs do not appear on a student's bill, they are real expenses and require an expenditure of resources.

Cost Increases and Your Aid Offer

Families should anticipate some increase in the cost of attendance each academic year. As the cost of attendance increases, barring any significant changes in a family's financial situation, the College will endeavor to maintain a consistent aid package year over year. The renewal of outside scholarships is the responsibility of the student, and lost funds will not be replaced with institutional grant funds (see outside scholarship policy for more details.)

- Students who receive named merit awards (i.e. Brockway) will receive the same level of scholarship funding for each undergraduate term in which they are enrolled. Merit scholarships do not need to be reapplied for and will not be increased.
- Students with institutional need-based grant funds will be awarded using the same percentage of tuition, room, board, and activities fee charges. In most cases, a student receiving a Bennington Grant of 50% of tuition, housing and meal plan, and activities fee should have a 50% grant for four consecutive years at Bennington assuming that there is a similar family financial profile, the student maintains satisfactory academic progress, and remains enrolled full-time.

The student/family contribution may change from one year to the next as family circumstances change. Circumstances which most commonly alter the contribution include changes in:

- a) Family income and assets
- b) The number of dependents in the household
- c) The number of children attending college

The Office of Financial Aid will attempt to make it possible for students with changing circumstances to continue at Bennington. Funding is limited however, and

students will be expected to utilize all forms of aid available, including student loans.

Planning for Field Work Term

Students should plan ahead for expenses associated with the six- to seven-week Field Work Term (FWT), suggested budget of \$1,000–\$3,000. Most students are off-campus during this time, and Bennington does not charge tuition for this required work period. Students meet their FWT expenses in a variety of ways: some with salaries or stipends provided by a the host/employer, some by doing a combination of paid and volunteer work, some by living at home. A Field Work Term Stipend may be available through the Field Work Term Office for students with demonstrated financial need. A list of names and ID's will be shared with the FWT Office, any tax data and all PPI will be protected in accordance with FERPA.

Types of Assistance

Scholarships and Grants

Bennington Merit Scholarships are awarded to first-year and transfer undergraduate applicants at the time of their admission and do not require an additional application. Scholarships will automatically renew each academic year of enrollment. See the [Terms and Conditions](#) on the reverse side of the financial aid award letter for information regarding requirements for maintaining your scholarship.

- **Presidential Merit Scholarship** - Awarded to the most exemplary students at the time of admission.
- **Peter Drucker Merit Scholarship** - Awarded to high-achieving students at the time of admission.
- **John Dewey Merit Scholarship** - Awarded at the time of admission.
- **William Kilpatrick Merit Scholarship** - Awarded at the time of admission.
- **Thomas Brockway Faculty Scholarship** - Awarded at the time of admission.
- **Young Writers Merit Scholarship** - Awarded to finalists and winners of the Young Writers Contest during their high school enrollment.

- **Vermont Leaders Scholarship** - Awarded to high-achieving students who live in Vermont at the time of admission.

Eligible students can apply for need-based aid in addition to merit scholarships by completing the FAFSA and CSS PROFILE (first yr. only).

Bennington Grants are funded through the support of gifts from donors, often alumni, who want to help those who would not otherwise be able to afford a Bennington education. The Bennington Grant is a need-based fund, awarded to students with demonstrated financial need. These grants are renewable, and students are required to complete the FAFSA annually.

Bennington Named Scholarships are supported by gifts from alumni or friends of the College and are awarded based on the terms of the individual scholarships. Through Bennington’s External Relations Office, student recipients may have the opportunity to meet or to be in touch with donors.

The Federal Pell Grant is funded by the federal government and provides awards ranging up to \$7,395 (2024-2025) to eligible undergraduates enrolled on at least a half-time basis. Any grant amount indicated is an estimation based on information reported on the FAFSA and is subject to verification. Pell grants are limited to 12 undergraduate semesters only.

Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant (SEOG)

SEOG is a federally and institutionally funded grant awarded to Pell eligible students only. Bennington awards this fund to students who demonstrate significant financial need. SEOG awards range from \$1,000 to \$4,000 per year.

State Grant

For students from Vermont, [Vermont Student Assistance Corporation \(VSAC\)](#) offers several Vermont Scholarships and Grants to students who meet eligibility criteria. Residents of Massachusetts and Pennsylvania who meet their state eligibility criteria may use their state funds here at Bennington College. Applications are reviewed annually and should be submitted along with your FAFSA.

Bennington Tuition Exchange Scholarships are awarded to incoming students and are renewable each year as long as the student maintains satisfactory academic progress, does not take a leave or withdraw for more than one year, and continues to be designated as eligible by the parent’s employer institution. These funds are all gift aid;

there is no repayment requirement. For 2024-25 the scholarship is valued at \$42,000. Eligibility is limited to eight semesters of full-time study at Bennington or at a Bennington-sponsored program.

Self-Help Awards

Student Employment

Many financial aid awards will include eligibility to participate in the Federal Work-Study (FWS) program or Campus Work-Study program for international students. Work-study positions are part-time jobs that allow students to earn money to help defray personal and educational expenses. Earnings will be paid directly to the student on a bi-weekly basis and should not exceed the total work-study award.

Students are not guaranteed a job during the term, but many who try to obtain FWS work are successful. Earnings are paid directly to the student through payroll and are intended to be used for personal expenses during the term. Students will be asked to supply their employer with their class schedule, to avoid overlapping class time and job hours. Periodic schedule and timesheet checks will be made during the term to verify compliance.

Some campus jobs are open only to FWS-eligible students, but others are open to any matriculated student and paid through the Campus Work-Study student payroll. If you are interested in applying for student employment, a list of positions and payroll information is available on the [Student Employment](#) section of the Bennington website. Students who do not adhere to the [terms of employment](#) may lose their position and could become ineligible for any new student employment.

Community Service

The Federal Work-Study Program encourages both community service and civic employment. A small number of off-campus community service opportunities are available and can utilize your Federal Work-Study wages or supplement your Field Work Term. Past positions have included Bennington Headstart Plus, Hiland Hall School, North Bennington Graded School, Vermont Arts Exchange, and Hiland Hall Gardens. Other community service opportunities can be reviewed for inclusion and should be discussed with the Student Employment Office. Community service jobs are also listed on Handshake, under Student Employment.

Federal Education Loans

Students will be offered federal student loans through William D. Ford Federal Direct Loan Program as part of their financial aid award. Under this program the U.S. Department of Education would be the lender.

First-time federal student loan borrowers are required to complete loan entrance counseling and complete the multi-year Master Promissory Note at <https://studentaid.gov/mpn>. Graduating or withdrawing borrowers are also required to complete loan exit counseling before leaving the college.

There are two types of federal direct student loans:

- Direct Subsidized Loan: A student must demonstrate financial need (per the FAFSA calculation) for a subsidized student loan. “Subsidized” means that the federal government pays the interest on this loan until six months after a student graduates or ceases to be enrolled on at least a half-time basis.
- Direct Unsubsidized Loan: A student who is not eligible for (or not eligible for the full amount of) a federally subsidized student loan may take an unsubsidized direct student loan to cover education costs. These borrowers make either interest payments or capitalize interest due while they are in school. Capitalizing interest means that the interest a student owes (while in school and not making payments) is added to the total amount of the loan. See the Financial Aid Office staff for details.

Federal Direct Loans: Annual Undergraduate Combine Subsidized/Unsubsidized Maximums

- Freshmen: \$5,500 eligibility (subsidized maximum, \$3,500)
- Sophomores: \$6,500 eligibility (subsidized maximum, \$4,500)
- Juniors: \$7,500 eligibility (subsidized maximum, \$5,500)
- Seniors: \$7,500 eligibility (subsidized maximum, \$5,500)

Independent students and dependent students whose parents are denied a PLUS loan can borrow an additional unsubsidized direct loan of \$4,000/year if a freshman or sophomore, or \$5,000/year if a junior or senior. Eligibility may be lower for students attending for less than a full academic year.

Cohort Default Rate

A cohort default rate is the percentage of a school's borrowers who enter repayment on loans during a particular federal fiscal period (October to September) and default on their obligation to pay. The U.S. Department of Education releases official cohort default rates once per year. The FY 2019 official three year cohort default rate for Bennington College was 1.7% as of September 2023. The national cohort default rate is 7%.

Loan Disbursement

Disbursement, Notification, Cancellation

No loan or other federal aid funds can be credited to a student's account unless the student has registered for at least 12 credits (if attending full-time), so it is important that the student complete registration as early as possible. The student or parent borrower is notified prior to each term if there are any federal loans to be disbursed. **The student has 14 days, beginning with the day of notification, to request that the loan be canceled.**

Disbursement Amounts

For full academic-year loans, half of the loan amount is disbursed each term. For a one academic-term loan, the full amount is disbursed early in the term. Borrowers who wish to have different loan amounts each term of the academic year can take separate one-term loans.

Credit Balances

Borrowers whose loans cover more than the balance due to Bennington College will have a credit balance after loan disbursement. A credit balance can be refunded to the student borrower within 14 working days. Inquiries regarding the refund process should be directed to the Business Office.

Student and Family Resources

Other Resources for Paying the College Bill

Because it may not be possible to pay the college bill from current income and assets, families may wish to explore other resource possibilities.

Outside Scholarships

The best source of outside scholarships are your local organizations, so students should check with their high school guidance office, the local Chamber of Commerce, state

education agency, and civic and social organizations in their home areas. Any outside scholarship received must be reported to the Office of Financial Aid and be reflected on the student's award. While the federal government requires that outside scholarships be included in need-based aid packages, Bennington will apply those funds to any unmet financial need first, followed by a reduction of self-help (student loans and work-study), and then need-based grants if needed. Students receiving outside scholarships may require aid adjustment to prevent an overaward of their cost of attendance budget.

Note to Students: Please review the terms of your outside scholarship or grant as some awards require a GPA for renewal or as an award requirement. Students should request letter grades when registering for classes. Any students with questions about whether or not to apply for grades should discuss the matter with their faculty advisor and the Office of the Registrar.

Please complete the [Outside Scholarship Form](#) and submit it to the Office of Financial Aid.

Other scholarship sources:

- College Board Scholarship Search
- College Scholarships
- Chamber of Commerce.org
- Department of Labor Scholarship Search Tool
- Fast Web!
- Federal Student Aid – Finding Scholarships
- Scholarships.com
- Scholarship America
- International Students – IEFA.org/scholarships

Employer Tuition Benefits

This resource reduces education costs, and may change a student's aid eligibility, reducing need-based aid. The Financial Aid Office should be notified as early as possible of a tuition benefit.

Equity Lines & Mortgage Refinance

Some parents work with a local bank to access lines of equity or refinance existing mortgages. As early as March or April, parents should investigate what banks in their area can offer for the coming academic year.

Veterans Administration and Yellow Ribbon Benefits

Yellow Ribbon is a provision of the Post-9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2008. Yellow Ribbon permits qualified veterans (or dependents to whom the benefits have been assigned) to receive an education benefit in excess of the standard \$28,937 maximum for 2024-25. As a participating institution, Bennington College meets 50% of the remaining tuition and fee expenses with scholarship or grant funding; the other 50% will be met by the Department of Veterans Affairs. Students may also receive stipends from the VA for housing, books and supplies. Students interested in taking advantage of this program should send us a copy of their Certificate of Eligibility from the VA. Only individuals determined by the VA to be eligible at the 100% benefit rate (based on service requirements) may receive Yellow Ribbon Program funding. The book allowance and monthly housing allowance are not deducted from the Bennington College billing statement, since these awards are paid directly to the student. As a result, a student may owe money to the college despite receipt of financial assistance equal to the total cost of attendance. Bennington Grants will be reduced if total gift aid (scholarships, grants, allowances) exceeds the Cost of Attendance. Since federal regulations exclude veteran's benefits as a resource when determining eligibility for federal aid, students may retain eligibility for federal loans and work, and their total aid may exceed the Cost of Attendance.

Colmery Act Section 103 required verbiage in catalog per 38 USC 3679(e):

Any covered individual, is permitted to attend or participate in the course of education during the period beginning on the date on which the individual provides to the educational institution a certificate of eligibility for entitlement to educational assistance under chapter 31 or 33 (a certificate of eligibility can also include a "Statement of Benefits" obtained from the Department of Veteran Affairs (VA) website – eBenefits, or VA 28-1905 form for chapter 31 authorization purposes) and ending on the earlier of the following dates:

1. The date on which payment from VA is made to the institution,
2. 90 days after the date the institution certified tuition and fees following the receipt of the certificate of eligibility.

Bennington College will not impose any penalty, including the assessment of late fees, the denial of access to classes, libraries, or other institutional facilities, or the requirement that a covered individual borrow additional funds, on any covered individual because of the individual's inability to meet his or her financial obligations to the institution due to the delayed disbursement funding from VA under chapter 31 or 33.

Parent PLUS Loans and Alternative Loan Options

Federal Direct PLUS Loans

Families may decide to borrow additional funds to pay the remaining balance or cover the cost of their student's loans. The Direct [PLUS program](#) allows parents of dependent undergraduates to borrow up to the student's cost of attendance for the academic year minus any other financial aid. To apply, a parent must complete the federal direct PLUS application and a [PLUS master promissory note](#). The parent's FSA ID will be needed for login. If the loan is approved, funds are disbursed at the beginning of the academic terms.

PLUS Loan Denial

If the parent of a dependent student applies for and is denied a PLUS loan because of poor credit, the student will become eligible for a limited amount of additional unsubsidized federal direct student loan—\$4,000 per year for a freshman or sophomore and \$5,000 per year for a junior or senior.

Private / Alternative / Supplemental Loans

Supplemental loans are most often student and not parent loans.

Benefits of Federal versus Private Student Loans. The federal student loan programs are attractive because no collateral is required to negotiate them. The US Government assures repayment of the loan if the student borrower dies or becomes permanently disabled. The federal direct loans are made in the student's name, and the student is legally responsible for repayment. For more information on the differences between Federal and Private loans visit the Department of Education website.

Because students often don't have a credit history, a co-signer (frequently the parent/guardian) is generally required. These loans are not "guaranteed" by the federal government as are the direct student and direct parent PLUS loans, and thus are usually more expensive. *They should be a last resort after other types of federal, state and institutional aid are exhausted.* It's particularly important to be an informed consumer because supplemental loan programs frequently offer different loan terms depending on the borrower or cosigner's credit score. Borrowers should make sure they understand the terms before agreeing to take the loan.

ELM Select

Bennington College has created a list of historically used lenders using an external website to review, compare products and apply for private loans. Students have the right and ability to select the lender of their choice and are not required to use any of the lenders on the suggested lender list. Students are encouraged to shop around to find the lender offering the rates, terms, and service that are right for them.

[ELM Select](#): Select the academic level or the program you are pursuing to view additional information regarding lenders and products offered. The lender and specific product details presented are directly maintained by each lender.

Disputes Regarding Federal Loans

Any student who is unable to resolve a dispute concerning a Federal student loan, despite resolution attempts, may contact the U.S. Department of Education’s Student Loan Ombudsman at 1-877-557-2575.

Loan Interest Rates and Fees

For federal direct loans first disbursed between July 1, 2024, and June 30, 2025:

Loans Disbursed between July 1st 2024 and June 30, 2025	Unsubsidized Loan and Subsidized Loan for Undergraduates	Unsubsidized Loan and Subsidized Loan for Graduate and Professional Loans	Direct Parent Plus	Direct Grad Plus
Interest Rate	6.53%	8.08%	9.08% fixed	9.08%
Origination Fee on or after 10/1/2020	1.057%	1.057%	4.228%	4.228%

Limit to Federal Subsidized Loan Borrowing (150 Percent Rule)

For Direct Subsidized and Unsubsidized Loans, there are limits on the amount you can borrow each academic year and the total amount you can borrow as an undergraduate or graduate student. Per federal rules, an undergraduate student cannot receive additional Direct Subsidized Loan funds if the student has already received subsidized loans for more than 12 full-time terms. In this federal rule, 12 terms represents 150 percent of the standard completion period for the undergraduate program.

For transfer students, terms in which a borrower received federal subsidized loan funds at a prior school do count toward the limit. When a student receives loan funds but withdraws before completing the term, the term does count against the total (unless all

the term's federal loan funding is returned). Terms in which a student attends less-than-full time may count to a lesser degree against the total, depending on the loan amount relative to the yearly loan limit.

Tracking, Managing, and Repaying Student Loans

Repayment of a federal student loan begins six months after a borrower leaves school or graduates. The standard repayment period is ten years, though other options are available (including extended repayment, graduated repayment, income-contingent repayment, and income-based repayment). For detailed information visit: <https://studentaid.gov/manage-loans/repayment/plans> We recommend contacting your loan servicer if you would like to discuss repayment options.

Staying in contact with your loan servicer will ensure you stay on track for repayment.

Your Rights and Responsibilities as a Borrower

When you accept a loan, you accept legal and financial responsibilities that last until the loan is repaid. Here's a checklist of your responsibilities, as well as your rights as a borrower.

When you accept a student loan, you agree to:

- repay your loan(s), including accrued interest and fees, whether or not you complete your education, complete the program within the regular time frame, obtain employment, or are satisfied with your education;
- complete online exit counseling before you leave school or drop below half-time enrollment;
- notify the current holder of your loan within 10 days if you change your name, address, or phone number, drop below half-time status, withdraw from school or transfer, or change your graduation date;
- direct all correspondence to the current holder or servicer of your loan;
- make monthly payments on your loan after leaving school, unless you're granted a deferment or forbearance; and
- notify the current holder of your loan of anything that might change your eligibility for an existing deferment.

As a student borrower, you have the right to:

- receive a disclosure statement before repayment on your loan begins, including information about interest rates, fees, loan balance, and the size and number of payments;
- prepay all or part of your loans without a prepayment penalty;
- apply for deferment of your loan payments for certain specified periods, as long as you're eligible;
- request forbearance if you're unable to make payments and don't qualify for deferment (you must qualify according to the loan holder's requirements); and
- receive proof when your loan is paid in full.

Questions about your loans?

Find your loan servicer: Go to the NSLDS, the National Student Loan Data System, at www.nsls.ed.gov.nsls_SA/. Use your FSA-ID pin to log in and see a list of all your federal student loans. A drill-down will allow you to see contact information. If you have difficulty, be in touch with the staff of Bennington's financial aid office, finaid@bennington.edu or 802-440-4325.

Academic Progress and Academic Standing

To proceed successfully through a Bennington education, students must meet the academic requirements outlined in the Student Handbook. Concurrently, students must progress adequately each term, move through the curriculum with broad goals for achieving a liberal arts education and, within that context, with the more focused goals of developing both an area of primary interest/inquiry and the ability to do advanced work in that area.

Academic Advising is central to this process and active participation in advising makes it possible for students to make appropriate choices in their program of study. For more detailed information about meeting quantitative and qualitative standards - please refer to your Student Handbook [Academic Progress and Academic Standing](#).

Note: Bennington's evaluation of academic progress mirrors federal regulations regarding financial aid warning and probation.

To be eligible for Federal Title IV funds, students will be reviewed for satisfactory academic progress at the end of each term.

Academic Progress

Academic progress at Bennington is both quantitative and qualitative. Bennington's evaluation of academic progress is completed by the Office of the Provost at the end of each term in four ways:

1. By determining the number of credits a student has earned in a given term, as well as cumulatively over the course of their studies. Please see the quantitative standard below.
2. By reviewing a student's cumulative number of Pass, Marginal Pass, and Fail evaluations, and grades, if applicable. Please see the qualitative standard below.
3. By requiring satisfactory completion of Field Work Terms, generally required annually from each student enrolled for the full academic year.
4. By requiring timely submission and Plan Committee approval of a student's academic Plan.

After each academic term, Academic Services staff conduct an Academic Review. This process of reviewing students' records is the basis for determining each student's academic standing. Students who do not meet satisfactory progress standards are

notified (along with their families, when permitted by law. See **Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) Annual Notice**). Students who are at risk of academic progress difficulties remain in Good Standing but receive a designation of “Notice.” Students facing more severe challenges to their academic progress may be placed on academic warning or may be dismissed. A student may appeal academic dismissals as described below. Explanations for each designation of academic standing follow the sections on quantitative and qualitative standards.

Students on Academic Warning or Academic Probation will not be considered for Financial Aid Appeals for additional institutional or federal need-based funds. Unusual circumstances will be considered.

Quantitative Standard

Success in meeting the quantitative standard is evaluated by measuring cumulative pace, which is the term used to describe the ratio of a student’s cumulative credits earned to cumulative credits attempted; it measures how quickly a student is progressing toward graduation within the expected amount of time. Students must earn 128 credits to meet the credit requirement for graduation.

Bennington students must complete their undergraduate degree in 10 terms (160 attempted credits) or fewer.* In order to assure that this will be the case, a certain cumulative pace must be maintained from term to term. Each term, a full-time student is expected to take and complete 16 credits. When calculating cumulative pace, therefore, the number of credits attempted per term is always set at 16 for full-time students, even if a student has registered for more or fewer credits in a given term. The only exception to this is made for students who have been granted, by the Office of the Provost, an accommodation in the form of a reduced course load (see Accommodations and Support.) Students granted an accommodation in the form of a reduced course load are still expected to complete their undergraduate degree in 10 terms (160 attempted credits) or fewer, unless this is adjusted in the form of an additional accommodation.

Students who complete less than 75 to 80 percent (depending on term standing) of the total expected credits will not maintain the necessary cumulative pace to graduate within the maximum amount of time allowed and will lose good academic standing. The only exception to this is made for students who withdraw during the term for documented medical reasons (see medical withdrawal section for more information). The chart below details the minimum number of credits needed at the end of each full-time term at the College in order to maintain the necessary cumulative pace.

TERM	CREDITS REQUIRED to maintain minimum cumulative pace
1	12
2	24
3	36
4	48
5	62
6	74
7	90
8	103
9	116
10	128

In addition, at the conclusion of any term, any student earning a pace of 50 percent or below for the term (e.g., earning 8 or fewer credits in a single term) may be placed on academic warning or be dismissed from the College.

After careful consideration with the faculty advisor, a full-time student may elect to take a reduced course load of 12-15 credits for an occasional term, with the understanding that credits will be made up in future terms. Of course, a student's cumulative pace toward graduation is affected when fewer credits are taken in any given term.

Students may apply for part-time status by contacting the Office of Academic Services. This status means that a student is registered for fewer than 12 credits in a term. For these students, the number of credits attempted for the purposes of calculating cumulative pace is the number of credits for which a student has registered at the end of the term's add/drop period.

Transfer credits earned before attendance at Bennington or elsewhere while in attendance at Bennington count as both credits attempted and credits earned in the pace calculation.

*This limit does not mean that a student cannot take a leave or withdraw for a period of time; it simply means that a student cannot attend for more than 10 full-time terms.

Qualitative Standard

The college assesses qualitative progress by reviewing students' grades in their individual courses in any given term.

- A Pass (P) reflects satisfactory work and is equivalent to a range of performance from C to A+.
- A Marginal Pass (MP) does not reflect satisfactory progress, but the student will receive credit for the course. An MP is the equivalent of a D- to C- grade.
- A Fail (F) means that the student will not receive credit for the course.

Students' performance over the course of their time at the College will be taken into consideration when assessing whether or not they meet the qualitative standard. Students will generally lose good academic standing (see below) or be dismissed from the College if they fail 6 or more credits in a given term (for full-time students) or half a program (for part-time students). A failure in a 4-credit course combined with a marginal pass in one or more other courses in a given term, will also generally result in the loss of good standing or dismissal from the College, as will a term where the student fully passes 6 or fewer credits (e.g., 10 credits of MPs and 6 credits of Ps).

Any student who has academic difficulties in any course should discuss the problem with the instructor as soon as possible. Students may also utilize the wide variety of support on campus, including their academic advisor, counselors in Academic Services, and peer tutors, to develop the skills and work habits that influence academic success.

In addition, students are required to submit Plan essays on time and have an approved academic Plan in place by the end of their fourth term; therefore, timely submission and approval of a student's academic Plan is considered when evaluating qualitative progress. A student will generally lose good standing if a Plan is not approved, a Plan is deferred twice, a Plan is not in place at the end of a student's fourth term, or a Plan is not progressing well. A student who fails to submit a required Plan essay in any given term will also generally lose good standing (see below).

Students are expected to have a cumulative average of C or above (or the equivalent) by the end of their second year. However, a student may have passed several courses in a particular area of study but still not be deemed able to pursue advanced work in that area; these decisions are made through the Plan process and with individual faculty members. In such cases, the student will be advised to propose another area of study and/or will be advised that one or more extra terms are necessary for graduation; in some cases, the student may be dismissed from the College.

Academic Standing

The Office of the Provost determines each student's academic standing after considering academic progress as described above.

Good standing. All students enter Bennington in good standing and remain in good standing as long as they continue to make satisfactory academic progress. If a student loses good academic standing they may regain their standing by meeting the expectations outlined in the sections below.

Notice. Students in good standing may receive a notation of "Notice" if their coursework or FWT assessment does not fully meet the college's qualitative and quantitative expectations. Students with a "Notice" designation are still considered to be in good academic standing; the designation is meant to alert them and their advisor that they need to pay particularly careful attention to their academic progress in order to avoid a loss of good academic standing in a future term.

Academic warning. Academic Warning is a loss of good academic standing as a result of failing to meet satisfactory academic progress as outlined in the quantitative and qualitative sections above. In order to return to good standing, students placed on Academic Warning are expected to earn a full course load of credits (16 credits, unless approved for a reduced course load accommodation), with no marginal passes or failures; students electing to take grades must earn grades of C or better. In addition, students are expected to satisfy any Plan action for the term, including submitting their Plan on time and having it approved during the term. Students on academic warning must also maintain the necessary cumulative pace to be returned to good standing at the end of the term. Students who do not return to good standing following a term of academic warning will be dismissed. Normally, only one term of Warning is permitted. Please note that students who are on Academic Warning are not eligible for non-term campus employment or non-term residency.

Students on Academic Warning will have their financial aid eligibility reinstated for one term and are not required to submit a financial aid appeal.

Academic Probation. A student who has been dismissed following a term of Academic Warning can appeal for a term of Academic Probation (see Appeals section below). Students on probation are required to work with a member of the Office of the Provost and their faculty advisor to complete a Satisfactory Academic Progress Plan (SAP Plan) for regaining and maintaining satisfactory academic progress. SAP Plans must be drafted before students return for their term of Probation and given provisional approval by a member of the Office of the Provost. The SAP Plan must be reviewed and approved by a member of the Academic Services staff and faculty advisor at the

beginning of the term of Probation and must be signed by the student. Students who fail to complete an SAP Plan for Probation, whose SAP Plan is not approved, or students who do not successfully complete the requirements set forth in the SAP Plan, will be dismissed from the College. Please note that students who are on Academic Probation are not eligible for non-term campus employment or non-term residency.

A student on academic probation will have their financial aid eligibility reinstated for one term only.

Good Standing–Satisfactory Academic Progress Plan (SAP Plan). Students who successfully complete a term of academic warning or academic probation but are unable to regain the required minimum cumulative pace after just one term will continue on a SAP Plan until they regain a satisfactory pace. Students who only minimally meet the expectations to return to good standing from academic warning may be placed on a SAP Plan for the term following warning. Students following a SAP Plan must meet the terms of their SAP Plan; those who do not will be dismissed from the College.

Appeals following academic dismissal. Students who have been dismissed may submit an appeal to return for a term of Academic Warning (if dismissed following a term of good standing) or Probation (if dismissed following a term of Warning or Probation), which shall be determined by the Appeals Committee at its discretion. For more information go to [Academic Progress and Academic Standing](#).

Add/Drop/Withdrawal Policy

All students, in consultation with their faculty advisors, may make adjustments to their course schedule at the beginning of each term. This is accomplished through individual outreach to faculty members and completion of Add/Drop forms, which are available online in the Student Forms and Resources section on the Registrar's webpage and require the approval of the course instructor and faculty advisor. Students who begin a class late (add the class after it has begun) are generally considered absent for the classes they missed and are not excused from completing the missed work. Students should always be certain to check course attendance policies and monitor total absences, especially when they have missed earlier class sessions due to a late addition.

During the first two weeks of each term, dropped full-term courses are not noted on the transcript; between the third and eighth weeks, they are noted as “withdrawn” on the transcript. Students are not allowed to withdraw from full-term courses after the eighth

week without permission from the Office of the Provost and Dean and this permission is given only in exceptional circumstances (see withdrawal from a course in the second half of a term below). Note: Deadlines may be different for 3- or 7-week courses. Students may not withdraw from a course to avoid failing due to an issue of academic dishonesty.

Withdrawal from a course in the second half of a term. When a course cannot be completed for some exceptional circumstances (e.g., illness, injury, or extreme personal circumstances) following the withdrawal deadline each term, the student must speak with the faculty member, the faculty advisor, and the Office of the Provost to request permission to withdraw. (Accommodations under ADA and Title IX that include withdrawals after the deadline are reviewed and approved by Academic Services.) When applicable, documentation from medical care providers must be submitted to Academic Services for these withdrawals. Withdrawals are noted on transcripts. No refunds are given for withdrawn courses. Normally, withdrawals must be requested before the last day of class each term. No credit is granted for withdrawals; therefore, cumulative pace is affected when students withdraw from a course. See the Quantitative Standard section for information about minimum cumulative pace requirements.

Withdrawal and Refund Policy

Bennington College's withdrawal and refund policy applies to all students who withdraw, are dismissed or take a leave of absence from the college after the start of classes.

Students considering a withdrawal from the College should discuss their circumstances with a member of the Academic Services staff and, once decided, should submit a [withdrawal form](#) in a timely manner. The Academic Services Office will issue an official notification to the Business Office and Financial Aid to calculate changes (if required) to charges for the term and prorate the financial aid earned.

For students withdrawing during the term, the following date classifications are recorded.

- **Date of Notification** | This is date student confirms either verbally or in writing that they are withdrawing
- **Date of Determination** | This is the date that the school determines a student is withdrawn.

- **Official Withdrawal Date** | This is the student's last date of class attendance and the date reported for enrollment and funding earned.

The *official withdrawal date* determines how much federal student aid a student has “earned” and will be used to determine the Federal Title IV “return-of-funds” calculation. Financial aid is earned on a daily pro-rata (per calendar day of attendance), beginning on the first day of classes until the 60% point of the semester. Return of funds calculations will not be processed if the date of determination falls after the 60% of the semester has elapsed. Weekends are included in counted days except when there are pre-scheduled periods of 5 days or more of non-attendance, ie: spring break.

The Office of Financial Aid is required by federal statute to recalculate federal financial aid eligibility for all students who withdraw officially, unofficially, administratively and for those students who take an unapproved leave of absence.

Charges begin accruing on the first day of classes within the term. Students who withdraw prior to the beginning of the first day of classes, will receive a 100% refund, except for the non-refundable enrollment deposit.

For enrolled, degree seeking students receiving financial aid, the following rules apply:

- Funds will be returned to any financial aid programs (federal, state etc) before any funds are returned to the student.
- Return of Title IV (Federal) Funds received will be prorated and refunded to the program. After the 60% point of the semester, federal funds are considered ‘earned’ in their entirety, and no refund will be made. Funds will be returned in the order prescribed by the U.S. Department of Education: Unsubsidized Federal Direct Loan, Subsidized Federal Direct Loan, Federal Direct PLUS Loan, Federal Pell Grant, Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant.
- Bennington Grant and Scholarship will be prorated and returned to the financial aid accounts.
- State grants will be refunded in accordance with state guidelines.
- Outstanding balances due to the College will be deducted from any refund due to the student.
- If the student's bill has not been paid in full or if there are new charges on the student's account (library/parking fines), the refund credit to the student account may not fully cover the charges. In this instance, the student may continue to have an outstanding balance owed to Bennington, and will not receive a cash refund.

- Students who withdraw or take an approved leave of absence must complete a [loan exit interview](#) online. Students taking an extended leave may go into repayment if the time away from classes is longer than the federal loan grace period. Borrowers will be expected to begin loan repayment or make alternative arrangements with the lender.
- Students returning to Bennington after a leave of absence or a period of withdrawal should contact both the Dean's Office and the Financial Aid Offices at least three months prior to reentry.

Certain charges are nonrefundable, including fines (library, parking, maintenance, etc.), meal tickets, the transcript fee, the health service charge, fees for health services provided, enrollment deposits for new matriculants, and interest charges due to late payment.

Return of unearned aid should be completed as soon as possible, and no later than 45 days after the date of determination.

The College may credit a student's account with a post-withdrawal disbursement of eligible Title IV grant funds without the student's permission for current charges for tuition, fees, and room and board, up to the amount of outstanding charges. The College must credit the student's account with the post-withdrawal disbursement of Title IV Grant funds for current charges within 180 days of the date of determination.

The College is required to notify a student, or, in the case of a Direct Parent PLUS Loan, parent, in writing prior to making any post-withdrawal disbursement of loan funds, whether those loan funds are to be credited to the student's account or disbursed directly to the student or parent. The information provided in this notification must include the information necessary for the student or parent to make an informed decision as to whether the student or parent would like to accept any disbursement of loan funds, and must be provided within 30 days of the date of a College's determination that a student has withdrawn. The College can also impose a deadline for the response requirement from the student. In addition, the notice must request confirmation of any post-withdrawal disbursement that the student or parent, as applicable, wishes the College to make.

For more information please review the Colleges Official [Withdrawal and Refund Policy](#).

Change in Circumstances - Appeal Policy

New Applicants for Aid

Newly admitted U.S. Citizens, Eligible Non-citizens or International students expressing financial difficulty after receiving their initial award eligibility letter may request a second review or appeal. The [Appeal Request Form](#) should be completed and should include the following:

- The additional dollar amount of aid which the student believes would make their enrollment financially feasible; and
- Supporting documentation that demonstrates the specific circumstances which have led to the request.

Please upload your appeal documentation directly to the [financial aid portal](#) for review. You may be asked to submit additional documentation before your appeal can be brought to committee.

An Appeals Committee will meet weekly beginning with the release of admission decisions. All appeals must be submitted no later than August 1 to accommodate processing time prior to the billing due date.

Continuing Student Appeals

Students may submit an appeal request to reevaluate a family's financial aid package if they have experienced a change in the family's financial situation or are encountering special circumstances not already included with the application.

The Office of Financial Aid cannot review federal eligibility on an appeal until after a student has submitted the renewal FAFSA and submitted all required verification documents. Questions about financial aid, as well as notification of dramatic changes in family circumstance, should be directed to the Financial Aid Office. Eligible students for need-based financial aid appeals must have demonstrated financial need, and exhausted all self-help aid (loans and work), and not be on academic warning or concern.

Please carefully review the following eligible circumstances below:

Allowable Appeal Circumstances:

- Loss of employment or a reduction in income which will reduce the family's recent income (Alternative Tax Year information may be requested)

- One time, non-recurring income/assets (ie: inheritance)
- Medical expenses not previously reported
- Loss of parent/guardian; funeral expenses
- Natural disasters
- Financial support for elderly relatives

The following are considered *ineligible* circumstances for appeal:

- Lifestyle choices. Expenses such as credit cards, mortgage payments, car payments, vacation expenses, and sports/enrichment activities
- Home maintenance/construction
- Parent/guardian(s) refusal to contribute to educational expenses
- Parent/guardian(s) has retired and is only drawing retirement income
- Student or parent/guardian(s) who do not wish to borrow or take out a loan
- Parent/guardian(s) payment of student loans for older sibling
- Currency devaluation for families residing abroad
- Siblings in graduate school or pursuing second bachelor's degree

The College will not provide aid to cover the family contribution for students whose parents/guardians are able but unwilling to cover balances or for students who choose not to receive help from their parents/guardians.

If your circumstances are not reflected in the list above, please email our office to consult with a counselor. All appeals should be submitted no later than August 1 to accommodate processing time prior to the billing due date.

College Housing / Meal Plan Changes

The residential full meal plan is a 21-meal per week, per term plan. All students living in standard campus housing are required to purchase the full meal plan. For students who are approved by Student Life to live in Longmeadow or Paran Creek Apartments, the Flex-7 meal plan is the default meal plan.

Students choosing to live in Paran Creek, Longmeadow, Welling Townhouse or off-campus may have their aid adjusted based on their revised cost of attendance. Students are encouraged to contact the Office of Financial Aid to discuss any possible changes.

More information regarding [housing and meal options](#).

Study Abroad and Study Away at Bennington

If a student's Bennington-Approved Academic Plan includes academic work from another institution applied toward the Bennington baccalaureate degree, financial aid for the term away may be processed by Bennington's Financial Aid Office. [Study away](#) offers many benefits including expanding upon a student's work at Bennington, broadening or specializing interests and areas of concentration, and developing skills and experiences that will set you apart in an increasingly competitive global marketplace.

Students studying abroad will fit into one of three categories for financial aid purposes: consortium, exchange, or leave of absence.

Consortium: A consortium agreement is a written contract between two institutions that enables a student to pursue coursework at a host institution, while maintaining enrollment at their home institution. Bennington students enrolling into a consortium with another institution (in or outside the US) may receive federal direct loan(s) and some federal and state grant funds that will be processed by Bennington College. Outside scholarships and awards may be transferable as outlined by their terms. Please note that **Bennington scholarship or grant funding and work-study eligibility is not available for consortium students at another institution.**

To cover administrative costs, a "transcript evaluation fee" of \$600 is charged per term to returning Bennington students who request a transfer of the credits earned elsewhere. This fee is charged prior to consortium funds being refunded, or for students not studying with a consortium agreement, when studies commence at Bennington.

Prior to a student's departure, the semester preceding the study away term, all arrangements for the transfer of funds should be made with the Offices of Financial Aid and Student Accounts.

Exchange: Students looking to participate in the various [Exchange Programs](#) offered at Bennington are encouraged to meet with the Office of Financial Aid as programs may differ in their makeup. In all cases, tuition will be paid to Bennington and a student's institutional grant funds can be utilized up to that cost. Room and board charges will vary by program and may require a student to complete a consortium agreement to utilize federal funds available.

Leave of Absence: Students choosing to enroll in another institution not connected with Bennington, have the option of taking a leave of absence and will be responsible for all charges and will not be eligible for any financial aid from Bennington.

A Financial Aid Checklist for Students Studying Away

- Work in advance with your academic advisor and the Office of Academic Services to include the courses you will take elsewhere as part of your degree program/academic Plan.
- If you wish to use federal and state aid funds to help pay for the term away, obtain a consortium/contractual agreement from the Financial Aid Office. You will need time to gather signatures from various offices at Bennington. Then, it is your responsibility to make sure an official from the program you will attend completes the agreement and returns it to the Bennington College Financial Aid Office.
- Discuss the financial impact of your term away with those helping you pay college bills. Make sure there is a clear understanding of the different costs and different amounts of aid. Federal Pell Grant, state grant, and federal direct student and parent loan funds can be transferred as long as adequate financial need is established. How much, if any, of SEOG funding will transfer depends on costs and aid at the other institution.
Neither Bennington merit aid/grant aid nor work-study can be utilized for a consortium study abroad.
- Once your completed consortium/contractual agreement is received by the Financial Aid Office, your aid award for the term or year away will be calculated, and a copy sent to you or your family.
- Bennington will send aid funds to your study program after all paperwork, including the registration verification, is complete.
- Be sure to have an academic transcript showing your evaluations from your term away sent to the Office of Academic Services. Deadlines are February 1 if you will return for spring term, and August 1 if you will return for the fall term. To receive financial aid for your subsequent term (at Bennington) you must document successful completion of your consortium term(s).
- If you decide, once you are away for a term, to extend your period of study at the other program for an additional term, you will need to apply for an extension through the Dean's Office. In addition, a new consortium/ contractual agreement addressing the additional term will be needed. Please call or email the Financial Aid Office to have one sent.

Financial Awareness - Resource Guide

Credit bureau/consumer reporting agencies

A credit bureau is a national consumer reporting agency.

www.equifax.com

For fraud alerts call 888-766-0008.

www.experian.com

For fraud alerts call 888-397-3742.

www.transunion.com

For fraud alerts call 800-680-7289.

Identity theft

www.optoutprescreen.com

The site where you can opt out of pre-screened credit offers for five years or permanently. You can also call 888-567-8688.

<https://consumer.ftc.gov/identity-theft-and-online-security/identity-theft>

The Federal Trade Commission's official site on dealing with identity theft. This site includes information on what to do if victimized and an affidavit to be filled out in the event that your personal financial information is stolen.

Money management

www.consumerfinance.gov

An agency of the federal government that regulates financial products and services.

www.mymoney.gov

A U.S. government site for financial education. www.mint.com A site for budgeting.

www.360financialliteracy.org

A site that helps consumers to make sound financial decisions at every life stage.

www.practicalmoneyskills.com

A site for personal finance resources, games and materials.

Student loans and financial aid

<https://nsldsfa.ed.gov/login>

A site for the U.S. Department of Education's central database where you can look up your federal student aid information including grants and loans.

<https://studentaid.gov/h/apply-for-aid/fafsa>

The official site for filling out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). You can also check your FAFSA status and make corrections to a processed FAFSA.

<https://ticas.org/posd/home>

A site for student loan facts, trends, policy issues and advocacy.

General resources for students

<https://studentaid.gov/>

A site for free information from the U.S. Department of Education on preparing for and funding education beyond high school.

www.collegeboard.org

A site to find colleges, learn about financial aid and use expert college planning tools.

Scholarships

www.fastweb.com

A site that offers a free scholarship search service.

www.scholarships.com

A site that offers free scholarship search capability.

<https://www.careeronestop.org/Toolkit/ACINet.aspx>

A U.S. Department of Labor's scholarship search site.

<https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/pay-for-college/scholarship-search>

A College Board's site for scholarship searches.